

Message Text

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SUBJ: U.S./ARMENIAN JOURNALIST TO INTERVIEW PRIME MINISTER ECEVIT

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1. EDWARD BAGOSIAN, EDITOR OF THE ARMENIAN REPORTER (NEW YORK) CALLED ON ME AND MY DEPUTY, JAMES GORMAN, ON JUNE 16. AT THE TIME BAGOSIAN HAD MET WITH THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCH AND HAD APPOINTMENTS JUNE 17 WITH BOTH PRIME MINISTER ECEVIT AND FOREIGN MINISTER OKCUN IN ANKARA. HE FOUND THE PATRIARCH CONSIDERABLY ENCOURAGED BY THE TREATMENT HE AND THE COMMUNITY HAD RECEIVED FROM THE ECEVIT ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING THE NEW GOVERNOR OF ISTANBUL. AS INDICATED IN REFTEL, BAGOSIAN EXPLAINED THAT HE WISHED TO DEVELOP A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY AND THE TURKS IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO. HE INDICATED THAT THE PATRIARCH WAS IN FULL SYMPATHY WITH THIS VIEW. HE REALIZED THAT IT WAS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE TURKS TO GIVE UP PART OF TURKEY FOR AN ARMENIAN HOMELAND OR PAY AN INDEMNITY. THIS POSITION, HE EXPLAINED, WOULD NOT BE SHARED BY SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES AND HE HOPED THAT, IN THE INTEREST OF RECONCILIATION, THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT MIGHT MAKE SOME GESTURE SUCH AS A PUBLIC STATE-
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MENT REGRETTING WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE ARMENIANS IN TURKEY IN THE PAST. HE HAD MET WITH AMBASSADOR KUNERALP'S SON WHOSE MOTHER WAS RECENTLY ASSASSINATED IN SPAIN. HE WAS SURPRISED (A) TO BE RECEIVED BY THE SON AND (B) TO FIND THAT, RATHER THAN BEING BITTER, HE APPEARED TO SUPPORT THE CONCEPT OF A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES. THE SON HAD ESTABLISHED A FOUNDATION TO STUDY THE ORIGIN OF

TURKISH-ARMENIAN DIFFICULTIES.

2. ON JUNE 18 I CALLED BAGOSIAN AT HIS HOTEL TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE RESULTS OF HIS INTERVIEWS IN ANKARA. HE WAS DELIGHTED WITH THE TWO INTERVIEWS WHICH WERE HELD IN THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S AND PRIME MINISTER'S HOMES AND WHICH LASTED OVER AN HOUR IN EACH CASE. HE HAD RAISED THE WHOLE GAMUT OF ISSUES INCLUDING A PUBLIC TURKISH APOLOGY, THE POSSIBILITY OF TURKEY PAYING AN INDEMNITY (WHICH HE ALSO REALIZED WAS UNREALISTIC) AND THE PROVISION OF TURKISH TERRITORY FOR AN ARMENIAN HOMELAND, ETC. ON TERRITORY, THE PRIME MINISTER COMMENTED THAT THE TURKS MIGHT BE ABLE TO REWRITE HISTORY BUT THEY COULD NOT REMAKE IT. THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT REPLY DIRECTLY TO THE REQUEST FOR AN APOLOGY OR STATEMENT OF REGRET FOR "PAST SINS OF THE OTTOMANS", BUT ENDORSED THE IDEA OF ESTABLISHING A TURKISH-ARMENIAN GROUP TO RESEARCH THE BACKGROUND OF THE TURKISH-ARMENIAN DISPUTE. THE PRIME MINISTER EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WAS NO REASON THAT THE ARMENIANS AND THE TURKS COULD NOT GET ALONG AND HE WELCOMED THE IDEA OF MORE DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES. BAGOSIAN SPECIFICALLY ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER IF THE TURKS WOULD RETALIATE FOR THE RECENT ASSASSINATIONS IN SPAIN. THE PRIME MINISTER CATEGORICALLY DENIED ANY SUCH INTENTION, POINTING OUT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DID NOT BELIEVE IN TERRORISM AND WANTED PEACE.

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3. I TOLD HIM THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT WAS ENCOURAGING AND SO WAS THE FACT THAT NOTHING HAD HAPPENED AS YET IN TURKEY OR ELSEWHERE IN RESPONSE TO THE ACTION IN SPAIN. WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS, HOWEVER, THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT COULD NOT INSURE ONE HUNDRED PERCENT THAT SOME INDIVIDUAL TURK MIGHT NOT TAKE RETALIATORY ACTION IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES AND THIS, OF COURSE, WAS THE RISK. HE AGREED AND WE BOTH AGREED THAT THE BEST RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM WAS A PROGRAM SUCH AS HE WAS TRYING TO INSPIRE. HE REPEATED THAT HIS PROGRAM WOULD NOT HAVE THE ENDORSEMENT OF ALL HIS CONSTITUENTS IN THE U.S. BUT HE FELT STRONGLY ENOUGH ABOUT IT TO TRY AND PROMOTE IT.

4. HE SAID HE WAS WRITING A REPORT ON HIS CONVERSATIONS HERE AND WOULD SEND ME A COPY. HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT ELAINE SMITH (EUR/SE) WAS AWARE OF THE CONTENT OF THIS CABLE AS SHE HAD BEEN MOST HELPFUL TO HIM WHEN HE TALKED WITH HER IN THE STATES. I ASSUME HE WAS ALSO WRITING SEVERAL ARTICLES ON HIS VISIT.

5. COMMENT: WE WERE IMPRESSED BY BAGOSIAN'S MODERATION

AND HIS COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM. WE HAVE NO
REASON TO BELIEVE FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT THAT HIS APPROACH
TO THE PROBLEM WOULD NOT RECEIVE THE SAME FAVORABLE
RESPONSE BY OTHER RESPONSIBLE TURKS AS SEEMED TO BE THE
CASE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER. WE
ARE REASONABLY CERTAIN THAT THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCH WOULD
GIVE GAGOSIAN FULL SUPPORT AS IN MY MOST RECENT MEETING
WITH HIM HE TALKED IN THE SAME GENERAL SPIRIT OF
RECONCILIATION AS BAGOSIAN DID. IN GENERAL, OUR IMPRESSION
IS THAT GAGOSIAN WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE RESULTS OF HIS
VISIT AND PLEASED THAT HE VISITED TURKEY.
HOUGHTON

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